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ABSTRACT

Because so many elementary schools are employing whole language instruction, it is essential that graduates from university elementary education programs be prepared to teach in this way. Twenty-five junior and senior elementary education majors enrolled in a block program of 3 courses: reading methods, language arts methods, and a field practicum experience 2 mornings a week for 10 weeks in elementary classrooms. The reading and language arts methods courses were combined and taught as one course for a period of 3 hours twice a week. The course was organized so that students were given a firsthand experience with whole language. All language arts were involved in an integrated way, although specific areas were also dealt with from time to time. Activities were self-chosen, based on students' interests. There were many positive results from this course. First and foremost, students learned whole language theories, processes, problems, and alternatives through direct experience. Probably the greatest shortcoming was that students did not learn as much content about how to teach reading and language arts as they might have in a more structured lecture-recitation class. Revisions to the course were made as a result of these initial experiences in teaching university classes with a whole language base. (RS)

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Maribeth Henney

Can a Whole Language Approach Be Effectively Implemented in a University Level Course?

Prologue: Professional journals enable educators to disseminate ideas from which other educators may benefit. Although in most cases, articles are about successful experiences teachers have had, one can also learn from experiences which did not provide exactly the results expected. The important thing is to use the less than successful aspects to improve future efforts. It is hoped that this article will encourage teachers to try new ideas even though not everything may go as expected. When teachers learn with their students, everyone benefits.

The whole language philosophy has spread rapidly through elementary schools. Because so many schools are employing whole language instruction, it is essential that the graduates from university elementary education programs be prepared to teach in this way. Since most of these students have experienced only a traditional teaching approach, many are doubtful that whole language will work. After studying sources about whole language, they agree that it sounds beneficial for youngsters, but they do not feel they could do it. They are used to more structured learning situations, with assignments, deadlines, and grades. Yet they will undoubtedly feel insecure about teaching this way if they have not experienced whole language applications in their own learning. The ancient proverb, "Tell me, I forget. Show me, I remember. Involve me, I understand," applies to learners at the adult level as well as at the elementary level.

The students in this study were 25 junior and senior elementary education majors enrolled in a block program of three courses: reading

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methods, language arts methods, and a field practicum experience two mornings a week for ten weeks in elementary classrooms. The reading and language arts methods courses were combined and taught as one, for a period of three hours twice a week. They were so organized that students were given a firsthand experience with whole language.

Since this required students to be independent learners, it was important that they understand their study habits and preferences. They were asked to write a response to a metacognition assignment, a list of questions about themselves as students. Questions included a definition of "study" and of "student," types of subjects they like to learn best or least; what time of day they study best; where and what type of setting; alone or with others; in large chunks of time or short periods; whether they did only the minimum required or worked beyond basic requirements; and whether they were accurate in evaluating the quality of their own work. This was submitted at the second period, and was used again at the end of the course during their self-evaluation.

The first few sessions were used to build background about teaching reading and language arts. Following this, students read Goodman's What's Whole in Whole Language? (1986). Discussion included theories and beliefs underlying the whole language philosophy and procedures, and the type of instruction resulting from this belief base, the learning environment, materials, activities, teacher's role and responsibilities, evaluation of learning, and what children learn from a whole language situation beyond content. Students had not been told at this time that they would be experiencing these ideas firsthand. They brought up some significant concerns during the discussion. How will children learn skills if they are allowed to do whatever they want to? If skills instruction is based on only what is

needed at the moment, won't some important things be omitted? Isn't it beneficial to learn things beyond immediate application, just because they are worth learning and may be needed in the future? How will teachers find time to help all children when they need it? Can this be combined to some extent with the basal approach? Is it the best way for a beginning teacher? These are typical questions from those not experienced with this approach.

At the following session, students were asked to recall as many characteristics of a whole language approach as they could. An attempt was made to draw from them the ideas which would be applied in this course.

Since one of the characteristics of whole language is allowing students to study what they feel is important, the next step was to have these students write what they needed to know to be an effective teacher of reading and language arts to elementary children. As I observed them working at this task, it was obvious that they were unsure about what they needed to include, for it is very uncommon that college students are asked what they want to know about a subject. After a period of time for recording their thoughts, they shared their ideas. A wide variety of areas was included. I suggested they might want to add others' ideas to their own list. When asked to indicate how they felt about making such a list, they were hesitant to express their feelings, and only after I directly asked them if they were frustrated did they admit they were. One student commented that they had never spent 20 minutes in a class before deciding what they wanted to learn. Following this preliminary brainstorming, students were assigned to give some further thought to the content of these two courses and to write their personal goals to be handed in next time.

Next the syllabus for the remainder of the course was distributed. This included assignments, instructor's goals for the courses, instructor's role,

use of classtime, independent work, sources for learning, possible units of study, possible learning activities, and evaluation plans. Each of these was explained to the students.

Assignments included writing their personal goals; keeping two journals, one a record of learning activities and one a metacognition journal to record thoughts and feelings about their reading, experiences and the courses; and writing a paper describing their proposed reading and language arts program at the end of the course to pull all learning together. None of these assignments was graded.

The instructor's goals were to prepare them to teach reading and language arts to elementary students, to develop a concept of teaching in a whole language classroom through firsthand experience, to build in the students a continuing learning process which would not end when the course ceased, to develop independent learners who knew how to learn and had a desire to do so, to acquaint them with many sources of learning, and to develop in them the ability to make decisions about their own learning, what to learn, and how to know when sufficient learning had taken place.

The instructor's role was to help students structure their goals, provide or suggest resources, provide information when asked or when a need was seen, confer with students individually and in small groups, guide self-evaluation of efforts, and provide constructive feedback.

For classtime, students were to come with plans and materials for constructively using this time. During class they might be listening to input from the instructor, or meet with the instructor to ask questions, get resources, clarify directions, or share completed activities or other experiences. They could work individually or with other students on projects. Classtime might be used for reading, project work, presentations to the

class, sharing, or taking tests. Students found it difficult to accept that this much flexibility would be allowed. It was pointed out that in a whole language classroom all students might be working on self-chosen activities, each doing something different and accomplishing self-set goals in different ways.

Independent study time was to be used for the usual types of activities students do outside of class, with special emphasis on thinking, recording learning experiences, writing in their journals, examining their own learning styles, and self-evaluating their efforts.

One aspect of a whole language classroom is the provision of a literate environment. Although this is not appropriate for a classroom used by various university classes, making use of a variety of learning materials besides the textbooks was stressed. Examples included professional periodicals, professional organization meetings and conferences, children, parents, teacher supply stores, etc. My own professional library was at their disposal for whatever they needed.

The possible units of study simply listed the topics which would be covered in these two courses under a more structured organization. Providing such a list appears to violate the characteristic of self-choice for a whole language classroom, but it was felt that this might guide students to become familiar with usual content for these courses. Later in the term, even further direction was provided, for it was found that students were unable to decide which pages from the two textbooks should be studied for each topic. Topics did not always coincide with chapters, but might be only isolated sections or parts of several chapters. After about four weeks, a list of pages for each topic was distributed as a result of students' request for more structure.

A list of many possible activities was included in order to give students some idea of the types of learning experiences they might do with the option to design their own. It was stressed that before "doing" a project, texts and other sources should be studied to build necessary understanding of theories, recommendations by authorities, examples, etc.

A final section dealt with evaluation, a necessary part of any university course. This was the area which brought the most questioning and concern from the students. The syllabus indicated that evaluation would be based on unit tests taken, individual conferences, journals, written reports and other evidence of learning, variety and number of activities completed as well as the quality of the work, effective use of classtime, personal evaluation, evidence of work throughout the term, and a final exam. As can be seen, this involved a number of characteristics of whole language: working independently at one's own tasks; conferencing with the teacher for help in skills, obtaining resources, sharing accomplishments; personal journaling; metacognition (self-evaluation); testing based on individual studies; and using writing for meaningful reasons.

Students asked how many tests they had to do, would projects and tests count equally, what would tests be like, and what was to be done in conferences. I told them some of these decisions were theirs. At first they decided that three tests would be minimum, but then decided that was not enough. Was a test needed on every unit? If not, how would I know they had read the chapters? I suggested they might do tests on some units and projects on others. They finally decided on a minimum of five tests and five projects. Some felt they did better on tests and others on projects, so they were allowed to set their own percentages for each for the final course grade, depending on what their strengths were. This was in keeping with the

philosophy of the course, self-evaluation and personal goal setting. Conferences, class involvement, and the final exam combined were given 20 per cent of the final course grade, but 80 per cent was divided between tests and projects.

This entire process of establishing the proper organization for the courses based on the whole language philosophy required a three-hour period. Discussion during that time was excellent. At first students were unsure that I meant what I was presenting to them, but gradually the trust between us grew and they openly expressed feelings and questions. Much critical thinking took place as they struggled to develop the concept of how all of this would work. Communication was not only from students to me but also between students in a true discussion. They were fair in setting reasonable goals for themselves. As the discussion progressed I pointed out to them the application of some whole language characteristics: making self-decisions as well as decisions for the whole class; risk-taking, since this was a new approach to learning and they were traveling unsure ground; each doing different activities; and many ways to learn.

Two comments from students show that they were not only developing the processes of the courses but were also able to see the application of the whole language approach. During the discussion, one student interrupted to ask, "Is what you are having us do here the way we would do it if we were to have a whole language classroom?" Another commented at the end of the period, "I didn't realize from just reading about it how so much was involved and how it would work."

In successive class periods, questions continued to come up about testing. Students had been told to let me know one class period before when they wanted to do a test on a particular topic. This necessitated that I have

tests ready on many different areas. They wanted to know if they could take more than one test a day; if they could take tests outside of class as well as during; if they could retake a rest to raise a grade; and how tests would be graded. At first I said tests would be either pass or fail, but they were not satisfied with that. They liked the possibility of retaking tests because that put the emphasis on learning the material. I was concerned that since they were all taking different tests at different times, they might pass the test items around, but there was no way to prevent this. I do not feel it became a problem, for students still did not always do well on tests. If they did know the items and studied that content, at least they learned it.

About midterm, I asked students if they would like to talk about how the course was going. No response came at first. I noted that they had set five tests as a minimum. Most people had done one; a few, two. Would they make it? This opened the floodgates. They felt the tests were much harder and longer than the 20-30 minutes ones I had said they would be (although this was never stated). They wanted take-home tests, but I indicated I did not feel that such tests showed if they really knew the material. Someone suggested doing study guides instead. I agreed that this would be a possibility. Some felt the tests were too much memory and no application, but others said their tests had had application questions. It was interesting that there were different perceptions of the same tests. Some students thought I should write on their tests what they omitted from their answers which would have given them full points. I said I would not have time to do this on every paper, but I could write a master test answer copy and they could compare their tests to this. They wanted to know if they could change their percentages for testing and projects which they had set at the beginning since they did not know how hard the tests would be. I said no, but they could change the requirements

for the tests and projects. After much discussion, requirements for tests were changed to be three tests and two study guides. They could no longer retake a test since the answers would be provided, but could do a study guide over that topic. The test and study guides would then be averaged for the recorded grade. Additional tests or study guides beyond the minimum could be done to raise one's average.

Discussion turned to projects. How many did they have to do? How were they graded? Were some worth more than others? They finally decided to go to a point system which they set by voting. Eight points would be a C. I thought that was low but let it go through. When they wanted to raise it by only two for a B, I said I felt that was not enough. So they went to 11, an increase of three. Then they set 15 for an A, an increase of four. The next job was to decide which types of projects were worth how many points. I asked for volunteers to form a committee to decide this. Many students volunteered. I selected several students of differing abilities. They discussed this without my input. When the list was written on the board, the other students accepted it, asking only a few questions for clarification. They decided that when they had an idea for a project, they would talk it over with me, describing what they intended to do, and we would establish how many points it would be worth.

This was a difficult class period. It was very challenging to guide them while appearing to stay neutral. They were so concerned about grades that they wanted specific guidelines on what to do and how much, as they are used to having from most courses. To get them to learn for the joy of learning and to be able to tell for themselves when they sufficiently know a topic seems to be beyond their capabilities when grade point average is so important at the university. This is a sad commentary on our educational

system.

I later had them make a study guide on one chapter, since there would have been no way I could have written them all in such a short time. I explained to them that this was an example of functional learning which the whole language approach proposed, since they were making these for their own use and for other students. Also they needed to know how to write study guides for their future students, so this would be practical learning for them. They accepted my reasoning, but were concerned about having one more thing to do, so we changed the requirements from having to do two study guides to completing one and writing one. This was acceptable. I had made a study guide for them to see as an example. After studying it, they listed what it should include as guidelines for their work. I was pleased with the results from most students. Several said they knew the chapter they did their study guide on better than anything else.

At first, use of classtime was not as effective as it might have been. Three hours seemed to be longer than they could concentrate on independent work. As expected, during the first couple of periods, time was spent on simply trying to get organized, deciding what to study, how to learn what was necessary, whether to do tests or projects on given topics, etc. Eventually most began working on learning tasks. Some read textbooks or other sources. Some cut out parts of bulletin boards or learning centers. Others wrote plans or reports about work completed. As the term progressed, time was also used for taking individual tests.

Although on the surface it appeared that all were working, I had to ask if this was the most efficient use of classtime. Couldn't reading textbooks and cutting out things be better done individually? I had hoped students would use the time together for in-depth discussions on topics, sharing ideas,

or working on group projects--activities which needed to be done with others. Some of this did take place and was recognized, but much individual work also occurred. Maybe this is to be expected in a whole language classroom since each student is doing what he/she needs to do.

One of the problems pointed out by students was having to bring to class all the materials they needed for their projects, when all this was at home or in other places. They did not like having to write so much by hand when they were used to using a computer. Some requested to go to the computer lab to work during classtime, or to the instructional resource center where materials and machines were available for laminating, book binding, etc. At first I resisted because I had no way to be sure they were using classtime for appropriate purposes, but I finally agreed because this seemed to be necessary for them to do their work. This is a significant difference for a college class using whole language, for in an elementary classroom all materials would be nearby and readily available.

One large advantage of students working during classtime was that they could meet with me frequently to get answers or to borrow materials from my library to help them on projects. I recorded each contact I had with students and later transferred the entry to the student's personal record, so I had a complete record of what that student did and what help had been given. Even those students who made no contact with me were observed and notes made about what they were doing. "Kid-watching" proved to be an effective method of evaluation.

As students completed projects, I encouraged them to share them in class so others could benefit from their learning. The first one finished was a learning center about an author. It was well done so I had the two students display it and explain it to the class. I did not realize it at the time, but

this set a precedent which was not intended. Others inferred that the type of projects I wanted was a learning center or bulletin board--something "made." So many of the projects were of this type, some of which were simply copied from the many ideabooks available for teachers and required very little thought. There was too much doing and not enough thinking; superficial vs. in-depth learning. Some students did do projects involving research, extended reading on a topic, integration of ideas, and/or critical thinking. Comments from these students indicated that they saw the significance of more in-depth study: "I'd rather do one or two large projects than make a lot of things." "I think it fits the whole language philosophy better if the children in my future classrooms are allowed to make centers and activities. It's more important that I understand the theory underlying what I am to teach." "Since I don't know what grade I'll be teaching, it's better to wait to make things. The ideas I learn now can be adapted to any grade level."

In order that students would be exposed to certain content which was not too well covered in our texts and which I felt they might not learn otherwise, I decided to do some lecture/participation sessions. Attempting to follow the whole language idea of invitation to learning, the first time I wanted to present a topic, I announced that I would be presenting some information in one corner of the room and if they felt they needed this, they could come. Otherwise they could continue with their independent work. Only three students came. After this, when I wanted to present a topic, I did not give them a choice, but had the whole class attend. These lecture sessions were not done every class period, but occasionally. Students commented that they felt they learned more than when trying to study a topic on their own.

Several topics were also presented by students, either individually or as a group. They researched materials beyond our texts and developed a

thorough treatment of the topic, presenting background information, teaching ideas, related materials, and a demonstration or a class participation activity. The students also indicated that they learned from these.

A sixth grade teacher was contacted and plans made for a penpal letter exchange. It was explained that this was a functional writing activity for a real audience for both the college students and the youngsters. We brainstormed what kinds of things might be put in a penpal letter. I encouraged them to watch that they used correct handwriting and spelling in their letters (chronic problems for college students). The sixth grade teacher did not tell her students about the project until letters began coming in. Then they used this opportunity for a series of writing lessons, going through all the steps of the writing process in order to finally send letters back to the college students. My students were anxious to hear from them but I explained that the delay was due to the lessons being taught to the children. As letters came, they were read aloud in class, a functional use of oral reading. Time allowed for only a couple of exchanges during the term. The project was concluded by my students going to the school to meet their penpals. Since both parties had described themselves in their letters, the students and children tried to find each other without giving names right away. After all were matched, a visit time was held, with the sixth graders later introducing their penpals to the class and telling about them. The teacher took pictures during the visit. A volunteer committee of the university class later wrote an article about the whole project to be published along with some pictures in the local newspaper.

As lectures, student presentations, project sharing, and penpals were added to class activities, the three hours seemed less burdensome. There was enough variety in activities that not as much time was left to work on

independent projects. In fact students were almost resentful when sometimes other activities used the entire time. It was great to have this much time blocked together in order to do whatever came up without feeling rushed.

Journaling is a frequently used activity in elementary classrooms, especially in the whole language approach. This activity provided a personally meaningful reason for writing. To give students firsthand experience at something which they will use when they teach, they were asked to write two types of journals: one, the learning activities they did each day, and another, a record of their feelings about the course or things learned. The journals were handed in three times during the term. They were not graded but comments were made in response where appropriate. About midterm it was determined that the learning activities journal was no longer necessary, for what students were doing or not doing was evident through other means. The metacognition journal was more meaningful. Many students found this medium for releasing their feelings to be welcomed. A few used the journal to analyze and expand upon their readings. This activity was one more way that I could tell what students were learning from the course and its experiences.

Self-evaluation was an important part of these courses. Although the final course grade was my decision, there was still much opportunity for students to evaluate themselves. They made decisions about what to learn and how, based on their preferred learning styles. How much work should be done on a project before completion was self-determined. Only they could tell when they felt they had learned enough and should move on to something else. Perceptions were not always accurate, as evidenced by their reactions to low grades on tests. They may have felt they studied well but did not know the material sufficiently for the test.

At the end of the course, an extensive self-evaluation was written. I asked them to look at their goals they had written at the beginning of the courses and discuss how well they had met them. They were also to look at the metacognition pages written at the beginning to see if they had changed any of their study procedures and attitudes. They were asked to evaluate themselves in terms of their ability to be an independent learner, their use of study time during class, the quality of the work completed, how well prepared they were to teach reading and language arts, areas where they felt most competent and least competent, their best accomplishment, and what they learned about themselves this term.

Individual conferences were held at the end to discuss the course and their performance. They were encouraged to make suggestions for changes and share their own feelings about what had taken place. We went over their grades, and I shared with them the record keeping I had done including anecdotal records of their conferences and work.

Application of the Whole Language Concept

Although I have attempted to point out the application of whole language characteristics and procedures as the class was described, a more explicit explanation is given here. All language arts were involved in an integrated way, although specific areas were dealt with from time to time. Activities were self-chosen, based on students' interests. Learning was functional, with studying and projects done for a purpose--because the students recognized that they needed this knowledge to be an effective teacher of reading and language arts. The learning belonged to the learner; he/she had ownership of efforts and results. Application of skills was done through meaningful functional activities: reading, researching, writing reports, making materials, sharing,

giving a teaching presentation, record keeping, discussion, writing, creative expression, and many others. Students could follow their own preferences in learning styles, rate, and sequence. Metacognition was stressed, examining their own learning, knowing how they learn best, and when learning was sufficient. Mini-lessons and skills were taught as needed--how to do a learning center, where to find resources, what readers' theater is, etc. Frequent teacher-student conferences were held for various purposes: teaching, clarification, resources, sharing, discussing feelings, etc. Conferences were both scheduled and spontaneous. Work was done both independently and in small groups. Whole class learning was also used when appropriate. Students all worked at different tasks at the same time. Freedom of movement enabled students to get materials, meet with others, etc. as needed. Many resources were used beyond the required texts. Students worked for genuine audiences: themselves, their field practicum children, their classmates, their penpals. (However, I realize some were working only to please me, a non-real audience.)

The teacher was a facilitator, supporter of efforts, supplier of resources. Students participated in decision-making at many points during the courses--both for themselves and for the class. Evaluation was done through tests of self-selected topics, kid-watching, anecdotal records, conferences, projects, and a final exam. Journals enabled students to keep track of work completed as well as feelings and learnings. Process was stressed over product since the whole course was organized to evaluate the effectiveness of a whole language approach. Students knew all along why certain things were being done. Risk-taking was encouraged as students were asked to learn through a different method than they had used before. They also observed the instructor as a risk-taker, since she was trying a new way of teaching based

on current theory, unsure of how it would turn out but willing to experiment. Errors and misunderstandings were seen as evidence of the students' development and as opportunities for growth. Students were expected to succeed and encouragement and help were provided as needed to insure that this occurred.

Positive Aspects

There were many positive results of teaching the classes in this way. First and foremost, students learned whole language theories, processes, problems, and alternatives through direct experience. They are not likely to forget what whole language is all about. If they choose to use this approach when they teach in elementary schools, they will know what is involved and how to go about it. If they choose not to use it, it will be a deliberate decision based on first-hand knowledge and not because they do not know enough about it to feel prepared.

Although most students said they had only experienced a structured teacher-directed class where assignments and deadlines were given and they were therefore doubtful that they could succeed with self-directed learning, many did and were able to see advantages. They learned to schedule their own study time, to be better organized, to make decisions about what was important to study, to be self-starters and not wait for the teacher to tell them what to do, to find related information, to work cooperatively with others, and to realize the joy and satisfaction of carrying through a big project to completion. Things accomplished as a result of intrinsic motivation are much more rewarding than doing them to please someone else. All of this was, in fact, more like what will be required in teaching, since a teacher must decide what needs to be done, find resources, set his/her own deadlines, and get it

done to his/her own satisfaction.

Better use was made of my resources than is usually done. Because students were working on such a wide variety of topics, many different books--both professional and children's--were consulted for ideas.

Since students were meeting with me frequently, I felt I learned to know them personally--their personalities, interests, learning styles, academic abilities, feelings, as well as personal information they chose to share. Hopefully they also learned to know me as a real person and not just as an instructor. There was an atmosphere of openness and trust in most cases which does not occur in a lecture/recitation structure.

I felt that this "experiment" brought out the best in me. It is easy to fall into a routine when teaching the same course year after year. Because I was trying something I had not done before, I was also intrinsically motivated to make it work. I read extensively, talked with others who were using whole language ideas, observed in classrooms, truly wanted feedback from the students in the class, planned with them and not for them, and reorganized procedures as the students and I recognized needs. I can definitely say that I grew as much this term as the students did.

Concerns and Problems

Although these advantages to the whole language classroom are reason enough to continue this type of teaching, there are also some concerns which must be addressed. Probably the greatest shortcoming is that students did not learn as much content about teaching reading and language arts as students in a lecture/recitation class would have. They will undoubtedly remember what they did learn better than in a regular class, but learning was spotty, not comprehensive, and often not in-depth. I do not feel students were as sure of

methods, terminology, sources, or lesson activities as other students. Occasional lectures were given but it might be even better if more of this was done. Some students commented that when they were in their field practicum experience, the cooperating teachers assumed they knew things and they were embarrassed when they did not. If this is happening, then I feel I am not fulfilling my responsibility of preparing them to teach. Is it possible that since there is so much content to be learned at this level, rather than basic tool skills which can be learned through any content as is true in an elementary classroom, that this self-selection procedure will not sufficiently prepare students to teach? In elementary schools the writing process, the sounds of long vowels, the sequence of events, how to outline, and many other abilities may be taught whether the child decides to read about dinosaurs or Alice in Wonderland. The medium for learning can vary from student to student, while the basic learnings can be accomplished. In a college class, basic skills are not the main focus because most have been mastered, but rather content is emphasized. Of course, one can learn to teach the language experience approach, for instance, through reading many different books, viewing films, observing a real teacher and class, listening to a lecture, seeing a demonstration, taking part in a simulated lesson, or other ways. Perhaps what needs to be specified are the end goals to be achieved in a course, with suggested options for getting to those goals. This would ensure that the students would learn the essential information while employing the self-choice and decision making of the whole language approach.

The basic question here is how to grade on process as well as product. Is this possible in a college course where students completing the course are assumed to be knowledgeable in a given body of content? If the purpose of organizing the class according to a whole language philosophy is to teach them

firsthand about whole language teaching, then this learning should also be evaluated. Our grading system did not provide for this, but was based on product only--how well they did on tests and projects. Some portion of the grade should have been determined also by how well the students adapted to the procedural aspects of the course and acceptance of the philosophy upon which it was based.

The inefficient use of classtime was addressed above, but should be noted again. It is imperative to use a variety of activities, including lecture, student presentations on topics, demonstration lessons, study of materials, and discussions involving critical examination of ideas, as well as allowing time for independent work.

Scheduling project work throughout the term was encouraged, but some students waited until the last couple of weeks to submit anything. Those projects were most likely to be ones to fulfill a requirement for a grade rather than being intrinsically motivated learning. They were of lower quality and things which could be done quickly. Because points for different types of projects had been set by the class, these students got the same credit as those who had submitted projects throughout the term and those who had put more careful effort into their projects. I felt this was not fair, but had no control over this evaluation.

The student's excessive concern about testing and grades made it difficult to excite them about learning for the fun of it, exploring topics because they wanted to. They are so used to being told what assignments to do and the exact standards to meet to get an A. As long as grades must be given in college courses, there does not seem to be a solution to this problem. Students do know the difference, for during discussion of this they could give examples of learning they had done only for their own purposes, but this

usually happens outside of school, not during classes.

There was an extreme amount of outside work for me, far more than for a lecture/recitation course with a specific schedule of events and due dates for assignments. The record keeping for students has already been discussed. Conferences and other observations made during class, test and study guide grades, projects, significant comments made by students, and evaluation of non-graded assignments were all recorded for each student. Tests had to be written for all possible topics. Almost every day some students took tests which then needed to be graded. Projects came in daily. Students required conferences outside of class. All these tasks became very time-consuming. With the exception that tests would not need to be written (perhaps revised) another term, I see no way to reduce this demand on my time.

Not all students succeeded under this approach. One student changed sections immediately after the whole language organization was explained. She felt she could simply not learn without structured assignments. Another student transferred to another section at midterm, explaining that my tests were too demanding and that she was not learning the content she needed under the self-study approach. Another student considered changing but I convinced her to stick it out. She really did quite well but never felt good about the class or her performance. Another student did very little during class periods, even sleeping at times, took no part in any of the decision-making discussions the class had, handed in all projects at the last minute, and blatantly said in his self-evaluation that he had learned nothing and that this class and I had failed him. This student was of greater concern to me than those who chose to transfer out, because I should have been able to reach him during the term but he made no effort to come to me for help nor did he accept my offers to help.

One question on the students' self-evaluation asked them to specify in what ways this course had implemented the theories and procedures of whole language. Although some students did well with this, many gave it little thought. Time did not allow us to discuss this as a class. I feel this was a weakness. Since this was my purpose for the organization I used, I should have made sure they understood and could reflect on what had happened to them. It was also important to help them make the transfer of what had been done in this course to what they could do as elementary teachers for their own classrooms.

A Bit of Positive Feedback

Sometimes one does not recognize the value of an experience until long afterwards. One student who had struggled with the self-discipline required for learning during the course, yet who had continued to make the effort to do what was expected, was very interested in my thoughts as the instructor about how the course had gone and if I had accomplished what I wanted to happen. We talked at length about this during her final conference with me. She helped me to formulate my own thoughts and feelings about the course, and I thought it showed maturity on her part to go beyond her own frustrations to be interested in how I felt. One day toward the end of one semester past the time she had my course, she dropped by my office to again discuss the course. She stated she could now see how valuable it was to her. She would have never understood or retained it if we had just talked about it. People ask her if she has had whole language and she says she has lived it. She felt frustrated at the time because she did not know what was expected but feels she learned so much. She learned to pick up ideas from everywhere, and be aware of sources. It has helped her write units for other classes because she sees how

to integrate learning across the curriculum. She feels that a lot of the students are still angry and feel they got cheated that term but "they just aren't seeing the overall structure. You have to do it to really understand it." She told me not to get discouraged when students are not positive, because it is valuable to do it that way. What a nice unsolicited positive response!

Revision Based on Previously Recognized Shortcomings

Following the initial attempt to teach university classes with a whole language base, and a couple of semesters with more structured teaching, I have done some careful thinking about what changes would make a better class. The aspects of the course that were successful were kept, while changes were made in order to improve some of the other procedures.

The main problems recognized in the previous attempt included: (a) students did not learn as much content about how to teach as they might have under more structured lectures; (b) learning appeared shallow and superficial rather than in-depth (perhaps in an attempt to get quantity, quality was sacrificed); (c) use of classtime did not take advantage of interaction among students nor involve meaningful interactions; (d) the evaluation process looked at products only rather than also process; (e) students worked for grades rather than for the sake of learning and being well-prepared as a teacher; (f) there was an excessive amount of outside-of-class work for the instructor; and (g) not all students were aware of the application of whole language theory and procedures for these courses. Revisions are discussed below in reference to these points. (These procedures are written in future tense because at the time of this writing, this class is only designed and has not yet been taught. After the spring 1991 semester, the author may be

contacted to learn of the results.)

Of the three hours of classtime each day, half of that time will be used by me to present topics of my choice, based on assigned readings. These presentations will provide for clarification of methods and strategies presented in the texts, explanation of additional ideas not given in the texts, sharing materials, allowing students to participate in application activities showing how various strategies work, and answering students' questions about these topics. The other half of the class period will be used by students for pair or group work. A list of possible types of activities to do during class was provided, including things such as having one student present a chapter while others discuss it; discussing controversies; doing activities for children suggested in the texts, in order to get a feel for how they work; tying information to their experiences in the field practicum; planning a topic and presenting it to the whole class; sharing independent projects they have done; etc. Hopefully this will give them the idea that classtime is to involve interaction among them, doing things they could not do alone. Reading textbooks or making materials, for instance, are better done on their own time. A list of areas which are usually covered in these two courses is provided so students can be comprehensively prepared as a teacher. The students will decide how the learning will be accomplished for these various areas, using any number of options such as lecture, reading, observing in classrooms, looking at tapes, talking with teachers, etc.

An extensive list of suggested project ideas is provided. Students are encouraged to select things to do which are personally meaningful to them and that will help them be prepared to teach reading and language arts. Suggested projects are ones requiring some in-depth thinking and coordination of ideas rather than those using only superficial learning. In addition to these

self-chosen learning activities, assignments are given to produce a literature-web unit and to attend the International Reading Assn. state conference.

Evaluation expectations will be thoroughly explained, with an emphasis on process as well as product. Students will keep journals which reflect what they are learning, projects worked on and/or completed, what they are thinking about, and how they see themselves growing toward being professionals. Conferences will be held throughout the class periods as needed. In addition, a final half-hour oral conference will be used in place of the final exam, during which the student and I will discuss various areas. This will allow me to note the breadth and depth of learning. Anecdotal records will be kept by me, noting conferences, observations, help given, etc. Tests will be used, but will be to some extent designed to evaluate those areas being studied by each student. A student will tell me beforehand what areas he/she has been working on and test items will be written for this content. Thus each student's test will be somewhat different, reflecting his/her own pattern of learning. Students are to keep portfolios of their own accomplishments in order to share this with me as evidence of their learning. A checklist was given the students to guide their evaluation of their own progress. Process is valued as much as product. Some examples are statements such as "is willing to take risks and try new things," "schedules conferences with me when appropriate," "integrates reading and writing in designing learning for children," "does a variety of independent projects," "uses professional vocabulary when discussing topics." Students will write a detailed self-evaluation at the end of the course designating to what extent they have met all of these expectations and evaluating their learning for the courses. Students are responsible for their own learning and for showing me what they

have achieved. Grading will be based on the level of the student's achievement in relation to the overall expectations, and will be decided together with me. Competition is with oneself rather than with another, considering effort, consistency, breadth and depth of learning, and self-understanding. The emphasis will be on learning rather than "getting a grade."

Some scheduling structure is provided. By scheduling certain topics to be presented each class period plus related reading assignments, students will move through the course expectations on a regular basis. Due dates are given for the literature unit, for tests, for journals, and for the oral conference. Attending the state conference occurs on a particular date. All of this should enable me to avoid overload for outside work, although independent projects will continue to be submitted randomly throughout the term.

In order to help students view these courses objectively in terms of the application of whole language theory and procedures, this will be discussed during a final period. If students have experienced these courses but do not see the reasons for certain procedures, the purpose of doing the courses this way has been lost. Although some are able to step outside of themselves and see what is happening, others apparently do not do this. Therefore a debriefing is necessary. At this same time, we will discuss how all of this can be implemented in an elementary classroom.

Concluding Thoughts

When one can learn from experiences, both successful and unsuccessful, and make changes in one's future behavior, the growth of that person is positive. If university students see an instructor willing to try things and learn from the results, perhaps they too will be more able to evaluate their

own efforts and make changes based on that self-evaluation. This, too, is part of whole language and being responsible for one's own progress. Learning by doing is the most effective way to learn. It is the desire that these students (future teachers) will be prepared to implement a whole language approach in their classrooms--both in terms of philosophy and procedures.

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